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WATSONVILLE, Calif. - A Carmel congressman is seeking \$25 million in disaster aid for spinach growers who had to pull products from grocery shelves after last September's E. coli outbreak.

But Democratic Rep. Sam Farr's request could be a casualty of war - the war budget process, to be exact.

Farr included his measure inside a proposed agricultural assistance package that totals \$3.7 billion. That package is part of a \$124 billion emergency supplemental spending bill that the House is scheduled to vote on at the end of the week.

Outside watchdog groups have decried lawmakers' attempts to stuff the war spending bill - which President Bush has threatened to veto because it includes a timeline for withdrawing troops from Iraq - with billions of dollars in spending for pet projects.

Citizens Against Government Waste on Tuesday named Farr "Porker of the Month" for his efforts on behalf of spinach growers. The Washington, D.C.-based group said Farr was exploiting the emergency spending measure to benefit his district.

Farr said the measure is important because Salinas Valley farmers lost millions of dollars in sales after the U.S. Department of Agriculture warned consumers not to eat fresh spinach for several weeks. A spokeswoman for Farr said the war budget bill was an appropriate place to seek help for them.

"Disaster funding is traditionally moved through emergency funding supplemental bills, and it's fairly standard for disasters to be combined and moved as one bill," said Jessica Schafer, Farr's spokeswoman.

Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Ill., offered an amendment to remove the spinach provision from the bill, but it

was defeated. At the time, he noted that a "\$25 million bailout for spinach owners demeans the bill. It holds Congress up to ridicule."